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AUTHOR Waggoner, Jan E.
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated self-esteem factors related to the transition between sixth and seventh grade for students in teamed and nonteamed instructional organization. Two elementary schools of identical structure, facilities, number of faculty, and student characteristics serve as feeder schools to the junior high school. Site 1's sixth grade uses an instructional team approach, while Site 2 remains in self-contained classrooms. Results of having 171 seventh-grade students complete the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and another eight-item instrument delineating factors related to the transition experience indicated a few differences between students in teamed and nonteamed classrooms. Students from teamed settings demonstrated a stronger affiliation in school activities, fewer concerns about the transition to junior high, and anticipation of being involved in fewer activities in junior high. Concerns of both groups centered around being late, having difficulty with lockers, getting lost, and being ill-treated by others. No statistical differences were found in responses by gender, days absent from school, order in which personal attributes were rated, or self-esteem. Two-thirds of both groups believed that they would be better prepared for seventh grade if they had more than one sixth-grade teacher. Interviews with teamed teachers, compared to traditional teachers, indicated that they felt their students elicited fewer indicators of stress in progressing to junior high. Test question results, participant variables, and lists of concerns and feelings about self are appended. (Contains 11 references.) (JDD)

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The Relationship Between Instructional Teaming and Self-Esteem of Sixth Graders Transitioning to a Traditional Junior High

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Jan E. Waggoner, Ed. D.
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Carbondale, IL
(618) 453-4225

Illinois Association of Teacher Educators
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During the period of adolescence, self-esteem is a critical issue that pervades every facet of life (Beane & Lipka, 1987). Fluctuating emotions, social relationships, and ability to adjust to changes affect how students make transitions from elementary to the next grade configuration (Reuman, 1984). In addition, the experiences students have in sixth grade may influence the way they are able to make transitions in succeeding grade levels. Having more than one teacher, switching classes, and being exposed to interdisciplinary teaching, characteristics of a middle school philosophy, may diffuse the stress of school-related strains that occur during transition from elementary school to junior high.

The literature is replete with studies that suggest that students undergo profound changes during early adolescents. Although only about 15 percent describe their lives as unhappy, confused, or turbulent (Hillman, 1991), some young people experience great stress and difficulty with self-esteem during early adolescence. Making the transition from a self-contained classroom to a junior high structure contributes to a number of social and psychological problems, partly due to the number of variables students are asked to negotiate in a "little high school setting." Reforms for middle grades education highlight interdisciplinary teams of teachers as "the cornerstone for affective education in the middle grades. Teachers on a team may be able to respond more quickly, personally, and consistently to the needs of individual students." (MacIver, 1990, p. 460) It is hypothesized in this study that students from sixth grade classes where teachers were teamed will evidence greater self-esteem and make a smoother transition to the seventh grade in a traditional junior high setting than will students transitioning from traditional self-contained classrooms. This study may help inform schools about the effects of middle school teaming and self-esteem on students. It may also have specific implications for teacher preparation and graduate programs dealing with middle school teaching.

The move in Illinois schools towards the middle school concept has gained momentum since the release of Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century (1989) by the Carnegie Corporation's Council on Adolescent Development. The recent recommendation

by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) certification division to implement a new endorsement for middle level educators has stimulated interest around the state. This endorsement will be required by those hired to teach in grades 5-8 after July 1, 1996. Many schools are actively seeking data from local studies on middle level education before making a decision on whether to change their philosophical and curricular focus from traditional junior high to middle school.

PURPOSE

This study investigates factors related to the transition between sixth and seventh grade for students in teamed and non-teamed instructional organization. The role of self-esteem in students' transition from a sixth grade with teacher teams to seventh grade in a traditional junior high is specifically investigated. In addition, this study addresses several research questions:

1) What concerns do sixth grade students have as they go into seventh grade?

2) Are the concerns of students who spent sixth grade in a team teaching configuration (experimental group) different from those who spent sixth grade in a self-contained classroom (control group)?

3) Are there differences in reported level of self-esteem between the control and experimental group once they entered seventh grade?

4) Does the use of instructional teaming by teachers in the grade prior to the transition to a new instructional setting (junior high, middle school, or high school) have any effect on the way in which students adjust to new school structures?

5) Are the perceptions of the effect of teaming on students different between teamed and non-teamed teachers?

SETTING

The study was conducted in a small (2,500) school district in a community of 10,000 located in the southeast corner of Illinois. The school district presents an ideal setting in which to conduct this study because of the unique aspect of instructional teaming versus traditional classroom instruction (control and experimental group) which took place last year in the sixth

grades. Teachers and administrators in the district are in the process of investigating the transition from a junior high to a middle school organization.

Two K-6 elementary schools of identical structure, facilities, number of faculty, and characteristics of student population serve as feeder schools to the single junior high school in the community. During the previous school year the sixth grade faculty at Site 1 used an instructional team approach, characteristic of middle schools, while the sixth grade faculty at Site 2 remained in traditional, self-contained classrooms. For purposes of this study, the experimental group constitute students from the Site 1 school, while students from the Site 2 school were assigned as the control group.

METHOD

During the first week of classes for the 1993-94 school year, 171 seventh grade students completed two survey instruments, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and another eight-item instrument delineating factors related to the transition experience. The RSES (Rosenberg, 1979), composed of ten items which are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, purports to measure global self-esteem. The two-week test-retest reliability coefficients range from .85 to .88. The test demonstrates both convergent and discriminate validity (Rosenberg, 1979).

Data were collected on factors related to self-esteem: belongingness (number of activities in which student participates), attendance records, referrals to office, grades after the first grading period, and deficiency reports. T-tests and Chi-Square tests for independence were run and data analyzed for significant differences between the two groups. Each indicator of self-esteem was compared quantitatively with T-tests and factor analysis. In addition, students were asked to write a paragraph describing their feelings about themselves during their Language Arts period to provide qualitative data.

This study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative measures. Using a 10-item semi-structured interview protocol, junior high teachers of seventh grade core subjects (language arts, math, science, and social studies) were interviewed to describe their perceptions of how self-esteem is evidenced in seventh grade. In addition, the assistant principal in charge of discipline and the part-time counselor were interviewed using the protocol. Sixth grade teachers

at both elementary schools were interviewed to detail issues related to self-esteem which typically emerge during students' transition to seventh grade. Additionally, qualitative comments from the interviews with teachers and from paragraphs written by seventh graders were categorized by emerging themes (see appendix).

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate that there is a statistical difference between students in teamed and non-teamed classrooms in only a few areas. Even with the demographic factors statistically similar, students from classrooms where teachers were teaming demonstrated a stronger affiliation in school activities and fewer concerns about the transition to junior high. However, these students also anticipated being in fewer activities at the junior high level. The concerns of students from both groups fell along similar lines and replicated those students in previous, published studies at the same grade level (Arowosafe & Irvin,1992; Odegaard & Heath, 1992).

A list of concerns new seventh graders had centered around being late (100 of 161 responses), having difficulty with lockers (72/161), getting lost (59/161), and being ill-treated by others (44/161). No statistical difference emerged between the control and experimental groups. In qualitative responses, students from the experiemental (teamed) group noted more positive feelings towards themselves than did the other group.

No statistical differences were found in responses by gender, days absent from school, order in which personal attributes were rates, or self-esteem scores by group. Differences were statistically significant in self-report of grades and in the number of activities in which students were involved. Thirty-six percent (36%) of students from Site 1 schools reported themselves as being A or B students and none said they were D or F students, even though actual grades given by teachers showed no statistical difference. Differences were also found between the schools in number of after-school activities in which students participated. Forty-five percent (45%) of students from Site 1 schools indicated that they were involved in three or more after-school activities compared to 27% of students from Site 2. Teaming may encourage participation in

grouped, after-school activities because teachers may encourage involvement with students from other classes and may talk about those activities more in class.

Two-thirds (66.9%) of both groups believed that they would be better prepared for seventh grade if they had more than one sixth grade teacher. Only four students from the Site 2 school said they thought they would be better prepared by having one teacher. Seventeen (17) students from both schools indicated that the number of sixth grade teachers they had would make no difference. Student beliefs seem to confirm the decision teachers made to commit to an interdisciplinary team organization. Both Site 1 and Site 2 schools transitioned to teaming for the 1994-95 school year.

Of interest is that both groups rated their best attribute in the following order: having talent, getting along with others, they have no best attribute, scholastic ability, and good looks. Further study needs to be conducted to investigate the differences when compared to other research findings on young adolescents.

Teaming appeared to have positive effects on teachers as well. Teachers in the teamed organization reported less fatigue, greater flexibility in their teaching, more communication with parents, and more comfort in knowing the entire student body. These teachers felt their students elicited fewer indicators of stress in progressing to junior high than did teachers from the traditional, self-contained classrooms. The perceptions of both groups of teachers (control and experimental group) indicated that they were remarkably aware of the concerns their students felt about advancing to the junior high.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

If data indicate that students from classes where teaming is utilized evidence greater self-esteem and assimilate into a junior high setting with fewer school-related problems, there may be crucial implications for teachers of early adolescents. Data collected from this study will be beneficial for school districts who are either in the stages of decision making or in the initial stages of transition to a middle school. In addition, data will be valuable to institutions with teacher education programs that currently have or plan to have teacher education courses to meet the middle school endorsement.

Of the 52 institutions in Illinois with teacher education programs, only a few currently offer courses that would provide sufficient training and field experiences to enable their graduates to function fully (without further inservice or training) in an implemented middle school. In the next few years numerous institutions will be seeking to add courses in middle level education to meet the new endorsement requirements. Data from this study will add to the body of literature on the impact of key elements of middle level education. Since this study investigates the latent effects of middle level teaming prior to students transitioning to a junior high or middle school, there are implications for instructional restructuring at the elementary level as well. The significance of affective aspects of student transition need to be considered as an integral part of middle level teacher education and curriculum development.

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Test Questions Results

1. Satisfied with myself

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	48	35.3	48	35.3
A	78	57.4	126	92.6
D	6	4.4	132	97.1
SD	4	2.9	136	100

2. I am no good at all

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	17	12.5	17	12.5
A	36	26.5	53	39
D	48	35.3	101	74.3
SD	35	25.7	136	100

3. Number of good qualities

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	48	35.3	48	35.3
A	70	51.5	118	86.8
D	15	11.0	133	97.8
SD	3	2.2	136	100.0

4. Do things as well as most other people

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	43	31.6	43	31.6
A	68	50.0	111	81.6
D	18	13.2	129	94.9
SD	7	5.1	136	100

5. Do not have much to be proud of

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	4	2.9	4	2.9
A	15	11.0	19	14.0
D	42	30.9	61	44.9
SD	75	55.1	136	100.0

6. Feel useless at times

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA		10.3	14	10.3
A	40	29.4	54	39.7
D	43	31.6	97	71.3
SD	39	28.7	136	100.0

7. Person of worth, at least equal plane with others

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	45	33.1	45	33.1
A	75	55.1	120	88.2
D	13	9.6	133	97.8
SD	3	2.2	136	100.0

8. Could have more respect for myself

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	18	13.2	18	13.2
A	44	32.4	62	45.6
D	36	26.5	98	72.1
SD	38	27.9	136	100.0

9. Inclined to feel that I am a failure

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	10	7.4	10	7.4
A	11	8.1	21	15.4
D	40	29.4	61	44.9
SD	75	55.1	136	100.0

10. Positive attitude toward myself

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
SA	50	36.8	50	36.8
A	63	46.3	113	83.1
D	17	12.5	130	95.6
SD	6	4.4	136	100.0

Participant Variables

Gender

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
Male	65	47.8	65	47.8
Female	71	52.2	136	100.0

Grades (Self-Report)

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
A+B	54	39.7	54	39.7
B+C	55	40.4	109	80.1
C+D	24	17.6	133	97.8
D+F	3	2.2	136	100.0

Attendance Center

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
Site A	61	44.9	61	44.9
Site B	65	47.8	126	92.6
Another	9	6.6	135	99.3
	1	.7	136	100.0

Number of After School Activities

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
None	22	16.2	22	16.2
1 or 2	61	44.9	83	61.0
3 - 5	35	25.7	118	86.8
> 5	18	13.2	136	100.0

Expected Number of Activities

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
None	25	18.4	25	18.4
1 or 2	75	55.1	100	73.5
3 - 5	28	20.6	128	94.1
> 5	8	5.9	136	100.0

Usual Number of Absences

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
0 - 3	53	39.0	53	39.0
4 - 6	47	34.6	100	73.5
7 - 10	18	13.2	118	86.8
> 10	18	13.2	136	100

Which Situation Prepares Better for Junior High

	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
One	6	4.4	6	4.4
> one	91	66.9	97	71.3
None	38	27.9	135	99.3
	1	.7	136	100.0

Best Attribute

	Freq.	% / Rank	Cum. Freq.	Cum. Percent
Scholastics	20	14.7 (4)	20	14.7
Talents	45	33.1 (1)	65	47.8
Looks	9	6.6 (5)	74	54.4
Get Along	35	25.7 (2)	109	80.1
None	27	19.9 (3)	136	100.0

CONCERNS	#1	#2	#3	#4	TOTAL
Being Late	40	32	19	9	100
Getting Lost	22	16	10	11	59
Lockers	17	31	19	5	72
Treatment by Others					
Students/Teachers	20	26	25	13	44
Detention	13	11	8	3	35
Grades and Homework	3	10	17	11	41
Routine Procedures	5	4	1		10
Map of school					
Lunch tickets					
Switching classes					
Changing for P.E.					
Other Concerns					
Keeping track of homework	1		1	1	
Nerves	1				
Making the ball team		1	1		
Taking all books to class		1			
No class with friends			1		
Lunch tickets			1		

Feelings About Self

Positive

glad, confident and sure 9
I have great drawing 2
good person, but not perfect
I like myself 10
I am a pretty good person really, an okay student 2
I'm fine
I feel great 5
I'm happy and exciting
I'm a good friend, and get along with my family 5
good student 6
I'm a good student and make good grades 15
wish I could've been a cheerleader but I tied with someone and they won
I feel proud as a student
I feel good about myself 1
I do the best I can in all subjects 3
I get along with mostly anyone, am easy to talk to about problems, I share my experiences with friends
I have a loving family and I have friends, I know that God and Jesus love me.
I have a lot of friends 3
I'm a good friend, make good grades 15
made Jr. High band
I'm nice, honest 6
some people like me on their team 5
help my family 11
help my team members 25
I'm a good friend 37
good family member 25
good manners
good at sports 8
don't act up a lot
I'm a good sport 2
my good looks and appearance
good listener
I have a high self-esteem
I'm fair and not picky, everyone needs a chance
easy to get along with
good hunter and fisherman
nice to everyone, even people I don't like
I'm always quiet
I can do almost anything if I put my mind to it

Negative

not too good
too questionable/hard for me to put into words
I don't think you should ask this question
weak, dumb, awful, and no good at anything
I could be a bit nicer and patient
I'm stupid and don't know anything
I feel put down all of the time and I'm a human being and should be treated like one.
I get whatever I want because I am the baby
I don't like people making fun of me
I'm too worried about stuff, especially sports
I'm a total creep, ugly, freckled-face girl and no boys like me
I'm not a good student, not a good family member, not a good team member
I'm stupid
don't do well in some subjects, but some classes are okay
kind of off-the-wall
not being a cheerleader
I'm ugly
not a good student, don't get along with my mom
I could do better if I tried—like in activities and being nicer
I get in fights with my friends and then they won't be my friend anymore
I'm in trouble all of the time except when I'm at home
I'm a stupid little kid that gets into a lot of trouble every day of the month

n% row% col%	Schol. Ability	Talent	Looks	Get Along W/ Others	None	Total
East Side	9	22	3	15	12	
	6.62	16.18	2.21	11.03	8.82	61
	14.75	36.07	4.92	24.59	19.67	44.85
	45.00	48.89	33.33	42.86	44.44	
West Side	10	21	5	15	14	
	7.35	15.44	3.68	11.03	10.29	65
	15.38	32.31	7.69	23.08	21.54	47.79
	50.00	46.67	55.56	42.86	51.85	
Other	1	2	1	4	1	
	.74	1.47	.74	2.94	.74	9
	11.11	22.22	11.11	44.44	11.11	6.62
	5.00	4.44	11.11	11.43	3.70	
Spoiled	0	0	0	1	0	
	0.00	0.00	0.00	.74	0.00	1
	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	.74
	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.68	0.00	
TOTAL	20	45	9	35	27	136
	14.71	33.09	6.62	25.74	19.85	100.00

n% row% col%	Schol. Ability	Talent	Looks	Get Along W/ Others	None	Total
M	10	24	7	13	11	
	7.35	17.65	5.15	9.56	8.09	65
	15.38	36.92	10.77	20.00	16.92	47.79
	50.00	53.33	77.78	37.14	40.74	
F	10	21	2	22	16	
	7.35	15.44	1.47	16.18	11.76	71
	14.08	29.58	2.82	30.99	22.54	52.21
	50.00	46.67	22.22	62.86	59.26	
TOTAL	20	45	9	35	27	136
	14.71	33.09	6.62	25.74	19.85	100.00

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n% row% col%	Schol. Ability	Talent	Looks	Get Along W/ Others	None	Total
A+B	14	11	3	16	10	
	10.29	8.09	2.21	11.76	7.35	54
	25.93	20.37	5.56	29.63	18.52	39.71
	70.00	24.44	33.33	45.71	37.04	
B+C	5	21	5	15	9	
	3.68	15.44	3.68	11.03	6.62	55
	9.09	38.18	9.09	27.27	16.36	40.44
	25.00	46.67	55.56	42.86	33.33	
C+D	1	11	1	3	8	
	.74	8.09	.74	2.21	5.88	24
	4.17	45.83	4.17	12.50	33.33	17.65
	5.00	24.44	11.11	8.57	29.63	
D+F	0	2	0	1	0	
	0.00	1.47	0.00	.74	0.00	3
	0.00	66.67	0.00	33.33	0.00	2.21
	0.00	4.44	0.00	2.86	0.00	
TOTAL	20	45	9	35	27	136
	14.71	33.09	6.62	25.74	19.85	100.00

n% row% col%	Schol. Ability	Talent	Looks	Get Along W/ Others	None	Total
One	1	2	1	0	2	
	.74	1.47	.74	0.00	1.47	6
	16.67	33.33	16.67	0.00	33.33	4.41
	5.00	4.44	11.11	0.00	7.41	
More	16	31	5	22	17	
	11.76	22.79	3.68	16.18	12.50	91
	17.58	34.07	5.49	24.18	18.68	66.91
	80.00	68.89	55.56	62.86	62.96	
No difference	3	12	3	12	8	
	2.21	8.82	2.21	8.82	5.88	38
	7.89	31.58	7.89	31.58	21.05	27.94
	15.00	26.67	33.33	34.29	29.63	
Spoiled	0	0	0	1	0	
	0.00	0.00	0.00	.74	0.00	1
	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	.74
	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.86	0.00	
TOTAL	20	45	9	35	27	136
	14.71	33.09	6.62	25.74	19.85	100.00

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n% row% col%	Schol. Ability	Talent	Looks	Get Along W/ Others	None	Total
None	4	6	3	6	6	
	2.94	4.41	2.21	4.41	4.41	25
	16.00	24.00	12.00	24.00	24.00	18.38
	20.00	13.33	33.33	17.14	22.22	
1 or 2	13	25	6	15	16	
	9.56	18.38	4.41	11.03	11.76	75
	17.33	33.33	8.00	20.00	21.33	55.15
	65.00	55.56	66.67	42.86	59.26	
3 - 5	2	12	0	10	4	
	1.47	8.82	0.00	7.35	2.94	28
	7.14	42.86	0.00	35.71	14.29	20.59
	10.00	26.67	0.00	28.57	14.81	
5 +	1	2	0	4	1	
	.74	1.47	0.00	2.94	.74	8
	12.50	25.00	0.00	50.00	12.50	5.88
	5.00	4.44	0.00	11.43	3.70	
TOTAL	20	45	9	35	27	136
	14.71	33.09	6.62	25.74	19.85	100.00

n% row% col%	Schol. Ability	Talent	Looks	Get Along W/ Others	None	Total
0 - 3	11	14	1	18	9	
	8.09	10.29	.74	13.24	6.62	53
	20.75	26.42	1.89	33.96	16.98	38.97
	55.00	31.11	11.11	51.43	33.33	
4 - 6	8	17	6	8	8	
	5.88	12.50	4.41	5.88	5.88	47
	17.02	36.17	12.77	17.02	17.02	34.56
	40.00	37.78	66.67	22.86	29.63	
7 - 10	0	7	1	4	6	
	0.00	5.15	.74	2.94	4.41	18
	0.00	38.89	5.56	22.22	33.33	13.24
	0.00	15.56	11.11	11.43	22.22	
10 +	1	7	1	5	4	
	.74	5.15	.74	3.68	2.94	18
	5.56	38.89	5.56	27.78	22.22	13.24
	5.00	15.56	11.11	14.29	14.81	
TOTAL	20	45	9	35	27	136
	14.71	33.09	6.62	25.74	19.85	100.00

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